

CATAWBA COUNTY TAKES PART IN “WELCOME HOME” FOR VIETNAM VETERANS

County’s Veterans Service Officer is also honored by vets during the event

On November 15, 2008, the Combat Veterans Support Group of Catawba County hosted a “Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans” celebration. The event, at the Catawba Valley Community College Multipurpose Facility, was attended by more than 500 veterans and their spouses.

“This event was held to give a proper welcome home to the Vietnam veterans of Catawba County, who were never officially welcomed home,” said Cindy S. Travis, Catawba County’s Veterans Services Officer, who was one of many who helped organize the event. “Our goal was to properly say ‘thank you’ to all of these veterans for the sacrifices they made for our country.”

The guest speaker was Clebe McClary, a decorated Vietnam War hero, who lost an arm and an eye on the battlefields of Vietnam. McClary shared some of his story of his time during the war and following. Now living in South Carolina, he has become well known nationally as a motivational speaker and is currently working to renovate a house in the North Carolina mountains called Old Stone Manor which, according to the Manor’s web site, will “provide accommodations for soldiers and their families as they attempt to readjust to civilian life together from life changing injuries sustained during wartime service.”



Clebe McClary spoke to Vietnam vets from Catawba County on November 15th.

Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (JROTC) units from across the county also participated in the November 15th event, which included special music and a PowerPoint featuring local veterans. Other special presentations were made by North Carolina State Representative Mitchell Setzer and Mick Berry, City Manager of the City of Hickory



Catawba County Veterans Services Officer Cindy S. Travis

Cindy Travis was also recognized by the Combat Veterans Support Group of Catawba County at the end of the ceremony with a plaque for her dedication to the veterans of Catawba County, and her efforts to make the event a success.

“Cindy’s been a big help to me as a veteran,” said Wayne Hermance, President of the Combat Veterans Support Group of Catawba County. “She worked on my disability case when I came back from serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom. The group decided to give her the award because she was so helpful in putting together the event and because she does great service for the veterans of the county.”

“Cindy has helped the veterans so much and they all think the world of her,” said Dianne Huffman, who was one of the main organizers of the event and is the wife of Vietnam vet, Frank Huffman, Sr. “She has helped get things done for them when no one else could.

From the very beginning, when I told her what we wanted to do, she volunteered to help call all the Vietnam veterans she knows and helped with the event in many ways. At the Soldiers Reunion in August, she told all the Vietnam vets she saw about it and sent out information sheets that will help us start a web site. She helped get food for the event, took photos and did many other things that night.”

Huffman said the “Welcome Home” event originated with the taking of a photograph of her husband and other Vietnam veterans in front of the 1924 Courthouse in Newton several years ago. She said her husband later said how much he had enjoyed meeting with his fellow vets.

“That photo got us started planning for the Welcome Home event because these veterans never got a welcome home,” she said.

The Combat Veterans Support Group of Catawba County has plans for other ways to honor and thank veterans from the Vietnam era. They are currently developing a web site about the group itself, and also are seeking ways to help McClary with the Old Stone Manor project.

For more information on that project, you may visit <http://www.oldstonemanor.com>